HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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McCALL, DR & MRS. ROY

Interviewed by

Patricia Young

March 31, 1980

INTERVIEWEE: DR. ROY & VELMA McCALL

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

SUBJECT:

DATE: 31 March 1980

TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: This is an interview with Dr. and Mrs. Roy McCall at their home in Mission Viejo, California for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project. It is March 31, Monday, 1980, and it's one o'clock in the afternoon.

I think first let's start talking a little about how your selection, you know (phone rings) oh, let's get the phone.

RM: Forsythe selected as reasonable and possible by the State Department of Education and Personnel who came down and looked over the whole valley. And that was before we had any, well, we were aware that they were coming. But we had no official relationship at that time, only an understanding that we would come the first of July. So we remained in an advisory role until hot first day of July, 1959, when their roofs

began to fall in all directions. So the Indian Wells Cove would have been probably the most spectacular, most beautiful site.

VM: You wanted to start, Darling, with when you were selected.

RM: Oh.

PY: Actually if you'll go over this part about the site while we're on it.

RM: Yes, well, and the board preferred the Indian Wells Cove. And when we visited that, it was obviously an ideal location, but money interests . . .

VM: Indio and Palm Springs and . . .

RM: Money interests became involved. And so you get into the politics of economics which touches education, sometimes favorably but usually in a damaging way. So the board lost its actual freedom to select the preferred site which was by unanimous choice, way ahead of the other sites, but the site on which the college rests was the second choice.

VM: And possibly was a better . . .

RM: Well, in some ways.

VM: It was flat, and . . .

RM: Actually easier to build on in a way. But the other

would have been in a rolling ground and higher and lower levels, so on. It would have been a beautiful, beautiful site.

VM: Yes, it would.

RM: But as I say money interests became involved. And Mr. Gogerty got wheels going as any aggressive and I might say, not ruthless (chuckle) yes, ruthless, big business people are likely to be. And he wanted either to be the architect or to sell the college the land. It was that simple. And the board rejected him as architect because the engineer on the board had had experience with him out at a Needles high school project, I believe. And he didn't like the way Mr. Gogerty worked. And so, and they wanted somebody of national reputation. And Warenky already had that.

VM: We were so delighted to have Warenky, Mr. Warenky.

RM: I think that also tried to include local architects because of Modesto where we built about four million dollars' worth of buildings in the five years we were there. We worked with a Sacramento architect, but tried to include the participation of some local architects who were familiar with the community. And we could get feedin and feedback. And so that seemed

the natural and Mr. Brumwell deserves major credit for working out that combination of the design architect and the participating architect who did the working drawings and the supervision of construction. So Warenky was the design man, together with his landscape participant. Don't remember his name at the moment, but he had designed, or done the landscape designing for a university in Israel.

VM: And he was scheduled to design an educational institution in Europe someplace.

RM: You mean Warneky or the landscape architect?

VM: Mr. Warneky, yes.

RM: Well, actually he designed the Hawaii State Building.

VM: Yes.

RM: And, of course, later . . .

VM: Oh, yes, but he was . . . Have you met Hale Bromwell?

PY: No, I have not personally met him.

RM: Well, he's the quiet participant in this, and . . .

VM: But very fine.

RM: He has not received the credit properly due him because he was, is a modest, cautious, soft-spoken person, but very, very perceptive and we certainly enjoyed working with him from the beginning. Actually, he's the reason

we went down there. I read in the paper about the formation of the college district. And the name of Brumwell as superintendent of the Coachella High School District appeared in that. And we had known him in college but hadn't communicated with him in years and years. So I wrote him a letter expressing interest in the fact they were doing one. And I said, hoped he would be their selection for the superintendent of the college district. And it was just an accident, purely an accident, that he said, well, no, there are reasons I can't be. In the first place, he didn't have his doctor's degree and the board were determined to have someone with a doctoral degree and who had had administrative experience at the college level. Brumwell had been there for years and years, had/a remarkably fine soft-spoken but firm administrator and he had the full confidence of the board. But he had developed what he feared was a health problem, some x-rays of his lungs didn't look good. And I think he didn't want to get in, and that's really the reason that he asked to be relieved of his assignment. At the time we brought, had causes to bring Dr. Ellebrook as the business officer of the college. But Brumwell's experience in the valley,

he knew it from end to the other. And his basic good sense and wisdom made him a really valuable instrument in the founding and in the early stages of development of the college.

PY: What were your initial impressions of the area? It must have been quite different than Modesto.

VM: Yes, it was. But we thought it was a very beautiful area. And the board members had selected a little home for us, was all ready for us when we arrived, which was very fine.

RM: Yes, that's Brumwell's, not bad.

VM: The property . . .

PY: Was this not on the property? Was this . . .

VM: No, we did move into the home on the property after it was decided.

RM: It was Yucca Tree Drive right in Palm Desert. It was a . . .

VM: It's pretty up in that area, and we liked it very much. And there was a swimming pool.

RM: A little scared in the Rocky ~~didn't it, across the~~ mountains.

VM: Yes. But our younger son climbed them. And had a wonderful experience. So we liked it very much. It was quite different, the heat.

RM: Oh, yes. Especially from our experience in Oregon. We were seven years there.

VM: At the University of Oregon.

RM: Rained three hundred and ninety days of the year.

VM: Scarcely a day without some rain, so it was, we enjoyed the sunshine even though it was pretty hot during the day.

RM: Oh, it was a dramatic experience in every sense of the word.

VM: Oh, I should say.

RM: Because it was a complete change in everything. We'd had five very, very, very good years at Modesto.

VM: Modesto College and we built a home there.

RM: Cause we built a new home and lived in it just two years before we made the decision.

VM: Mr. Mitchell came up to Modesto to talk with us. This was in the, right in the beginning, to tell us about the plans. The board members had been voted upon. I'd been so active in it and voted upon. And it was a fine board, wasn't it?

RM: Oh, that was our great good fortune.

VM: Very fine.

RM: We had a wonderful board of trustees, intelligent,

cautious.

VM: Understanding.

RM: But firm.

VM: Thoughtful.

RM: Just couldn't have been better.

PY: Now who was on that board?

RM: Don Mitchell was, the board was elected at large. And Don Mitchell got way far ahead of anyone else, the highest number of votes. And a dentist, Dr. Purcell, from Palm Springs, was elected from that area. Magahee, attorney who later became a judge, was selected from the Palm Springs area.

VM: Dr.

RM: And Ray Rummins, of course, in the lower valley had lots of support so Don Mitchell and Ray Rummins from the lower valley. And then it was Dr. Purcell from Palm Springs and Magahee, but Purcell, because of heart attack I think, resigned and a Bill Mason was also elected from the Palm Springs area, just, they were not elected by areas. It just happened that there were three from Palm Springs and two from the lower valley. And then when Dr. Purcell resigned, the remaining board members selected the person who was next highest on the popular vote.

And he happened to reside in Palm Desert. He and his wife owned the . . .

VM: Bill Cook.

RM: His wife was the sister of

VM: The author of, yes . . .

RM: And one of our first social events of a sort after we went there was a dinner at the Cook home, in their date grove just north of the Highway 111. So, and Bill Mason, the engineer from Palm Springs, was also just remarkably fine and wonderful person. And it was a great blow to everyone when he died suddenly of a heart attack though everyone knew his health wasn't the best. I think it was in February following our arrival there in . . .

VM: Was it June?

RM: July, and under the law then the board had the authority to appoint a replacement for him. And that's when they selected Mrs. Staley.

VM: You've met her.

PY: No.

VM: Dr. Staley's wife. Dr. Staley has passed away.

RM: Well, she was on the board for a long time until, I think, just a year or so ago when she decided to retire from the board. So we began with an all-man board and

then their first replacement was another man. And after that they selected a woman, but again, trying to keep a balance between Palm Springs and the lower valley because there was that sort of inherent rivalry.

VM: Helen Staley.

RM: But Bill Cook, not only was the next in line by popular vote, but he was at the midpoint between, well, almost on the dividing line of the two high school districts.

VM: And now Dr. Magahee's gone and Bill Cook is gone.

RM: And Bill Mason is gone.

VM: And Bill Mason.

RM: But Mitchell and Rummins were always re-elected on the board by great margins. And so no incumbent ever lost to anyone, which was, I think, a fairly good indication of the confidence the board engendered through their rather cautious but always well considered and firm action on all issues. And when we left, I was asked to give the graduation address. And I didn't really give one, but I reminisced a bit and I paid tribute to the board then and the fine, fine support they had given in, well, in all, through all the site controversy plus through the days of the sixties when students were trying to take institutions apart and tell trustees and

administrators how they should be run.

VM: It was a very, very interesting, wonderful experience though at times . . .

RM: A bit hair raising times. Yes, indeed.

VM: But it was interesting to leave a college that was well established and go down to the desert as president.

RM: With nothing but an idea.

VM: President of a nonexistent institution. But the board was selected and it was a very wonderful . . .

RM: My colleagues that was throughout the state used to chide me about, isn't that wonderful. How could you get a job as head of a college where you have no students and no faculty.

VM: No faculty.

RM: To bother you.

VM: So it took us . . .

RM: Three years.

VM: Three years to . . .

RM: We hoped we could do it in two, but . . .

VM: Get the students over the campus.

RM: Gogerty's intervention delayed us a year.

VM: Yes. But . . .

PY: What do you mean by that?

RM: Pardon?

PY: What do you mean his intervention delayed this?

RM: Well, his suits and suits and suits and suits to keep us from building on that site complicated the picture, so our attorney, Magahee, cautioned we better proceed with more slowly. Let's don't go, let's don't invest too much until we're more sure of our legal ground. But we won every suit up to the Supreme Court on which Gogerty's personal friend (chuckle) was sitting, and that court made a very obtuse technical ruling, which of course, didn't do us any damage at all, but in effect it didn't endorse the site. Something they claimed that had not been done in just the right sequence, so on and it was all a ridiculous sort of thing. But part of economics and politics, of course. This thing is going, is it?

PY: Oh, yes.

RM: Okay. Well, I'm just talking right out of, off the tip of my tongue.

VM: I didn't hear it running.

RM: So keep the questions coming. If at any time you want to interrupt, there's an old saying, don't speak while I'm interrupting. (laughter)

PY: That's a very good one. I'm still curious, what in the

world was the impetus to get you to leave a well-established college where you'd just built a home and were obviously happy?

RM: Oh, the lure of adventure, I suppose. And the . . .

VM: The idea of going down and building an institution from the very beginning. And the pleasure of selecting faculty, and the great pleasure the first day students came on campus. It was really a great experience.

PY: I can

RM: I think there was a bit of the urge to be a part of building. That's one of the things that took us to the University of Oregon, the plan to build a new speech-arts building. And we, that was our major project when we went, and I was head of that department. And we built I think one of the finest theatres in the west as a part of an overall building that we remodeled and added to the second oldest building on the campus. But they tore the whole inside out and put a floor through the middle of what had been the auditorium in that building and built radio and television studios upstairs. And then there were two floors of offices and classrooms, and then a basement with an experimental or studio theatre in it, and areas for stage craft and costume design and

that sort of thing. And so I guess that creative participation and building new facilities was in our blood. And at Modesto . . .

VM: And we built . . .

RM: Our first task that was ours when we took that was to get the people to approve a bond issue for the first new buildings the institution had had since it was founded. And we built a new science building, a new theatre, auditorium building, a new music building.

VM: That was a beautiful theatre.

RM: And additional physical educational facilities and an art facility. And that's hard work, but it's a lot of, I shouldn't say fun. There's a lot of satisfaction in seeing new facilities come into being when people have been working without adequate facilities for years and years. So about, well, and a new agriculture building. Four million dollars' worth of buildings at Modesto come into the college in the days . . .

VM: While we were there for the five years we were there.

RM: When a million dollars was a lot of money.

VM: And then Don Mitchell, Mr. Mitchell, came up to Modesto. And he sort of won us.

RM: Oh, yes. He sat in our living room and said, well, the

desert is different. You probably won't want to take any of this furniture with you. But my wife's an old-fashioned . . .

VM: Of course, I . . .

RM: New England lady and then she . . .

VM: Wouldn't give the piano away or sell it.

RM: So we had this furniture here and we took it with us.

VM: And we've got too much furniture for this house now, but we decided . . .

RM: Oh, yes, we left some of it in the desert, but we moved all of the furniture out of Trinity and took it down there with us and put it in the O'Dell house which, of course, was remodeled.

VM: Really . . .

RM: To accommodate the social program that we visualized. This gal really paid a price in arranging social events for, well, the first major TV ad there was for all the teachers of the entire district from Palm Springs to Mecca. And we had about six hundred actually come. I think we sent out invitations for fifteen hundred people on that day, but there were, oh, I guess that was the later one.

VM: Yes.

RM: But there were about six hundred teachers from all the schools within what became the college district who rang our door chimes from beginning at two o'clock on a Sunday afternoon and going until about eight. Ten o'clock before the last left, and that takes a lot of doing.

VM: And we had high school seniors.

RM: Well, that was on another

VM: And parents at another time.

RM: Those were the high school senior girls, my dear.

VM: Yes, and . . .

RM: And the buildings are still . . . I'm doing more of the talking because she isn't supposed to do much. Ordinarily, she does twice as much talking as I do, but . . .

VM: Do you believe that?

RM: At any rate, she invited, sent out written invitations to all graduating senior girls and their mothers to come for an afternoon tea. I guess it was a Sunday. Doesn't seem as though it was. No, I believe it was midweek. But the campus was still under construction.

VM: And LaSandra was born.

RM: We didn't even have a sidewalk in front of our house.

VM: No. No driveway really except . . .

RM: They were still working on the parking areas. And it was a beautiful, the day came on beautiful.

VM: Started that day and I was so delighted. It was just beautiful, and everything was fixed and ready, you know, by noon. You could guess what happened. Sandstorm.

RM: About ten o'clock we could see a . . .

VM: We had a . . .

RM: Dust storm coming down through the pass.

VM: We had put a canvas down, that is, the men had.

RM: One circus canvas we used for a sidewalk

VM: To the front door because we didn't have . . .

RM: Fastened it down with potted palms about so high.

VM: And it just looked beautiful. And, of course, the palms fell over when this terrific wind started.

RM: And the sidewalk began to ~~flatten~~ flap in the wind. And the people who came to the door were swept in by the swirling sand. But when they got inside, it was quiet.

VM: But we had a wonderful attendance.

RM: The group came down and a wonderful attendance. And they sat all the way to the top of the stairs. (chuckle) I wasn't there. After the guests began to come, I retreated.

VM: It was . . .

RM: But that was the forerunner of things to come in a sense.

VM: Just before any students came.

RM: The board's idea that we should make this not just a public institution but we should give it that more personal touch. And treat people as people. And one of the . . .

VM: We wanted the students to feel free. We were on the campus, and we . . .

RM: They wanted us to live on campus.

VM: And we wanted the students to come, and they did. They'd come to the house. And we had all the freshmen students each year we were there come for a little session and talking with us. And served, brought the tea cart into the living room, and we served them.

RM: Punch and coffee and . . .

VM: And it was . . .

RM: Tea.

VM: It was lovely. I had . . .

RM: Cookies.

VM: Taught through the years and so here I was not teaching, but I had opportunity to meet the students, have them in the home. And that was a great pleasure. It was work, but it was a pleasure.

RM: If I had worked it out to have them come from the

orientation sections and the teacher would bring them fifteen or twenty . . .

VM: At a time.

RM: And it would go about six hours a day for a week. Shaking hands with the students as they came through the door and . . .

VM: And then talking, letting them ask questions and talk about campuses. What they were doing and made us feel close to them.

RM: And every year we were there, we had a Christmas tea for all the staff, faculty and maintenance personnel, custodial.

VM: Wives and husbands.

RM: Yes, wives and husbands. And there was a warm kind of thing.

VM: Yes, it was.

RM: We felt, and did a lot to make the faculty feel their interrelationship and fellowship. The custodians and Ph.D.'s mingling, drinking spiced cider or tea or punch, whatever, and carrying on their conversations, coming and going, a whole afternoon and evening every year we were there.

PY: Was that different from other campuses you had been on?

VM: Yes, we didn't have the close . . .

RM: Yes and no.

VM: Association quite, although . . .

RM: Our first teaching was at Whitman College, and it didn't do that, but the home of the president and his wife was on the campus. And we were new, newly married, new to the job, and the president and his wife invited us to have dinner at their home, and they treated us as though we were important. And . . .

VM: The president's wife was just a beautiful person.

RM: Wonderful. And, well, at the University at Redlands, as freshmen, we were invited to an afternoon Sunday tea at the president's home on campus. And Dr. and Mrs. Duke met us at the door, and we came and went all afternoon. And when we were officers of the student body, I was president and she was in charge of vice.

VM: Vice president.

RM: Vice president, president of women students.

VM: We've always had a great deal of pleasure in working together.

RM: Then we would, as student government officers, all those elected officers of the student body, had tea in the president's home where we talked about the problems of

student government. So in our lives it was a tradition, and in Don Mitchell's experience, that tradition was important. And at Whitman College it was important. At University of Pacific, not quite so much so, but there again, we carried that on because some of the years we were there, Mrs. McCall was in charge. She was professor in charge of elementary student training. And part of . . .

VM: Teachers and . . .

RM: She lectured to forty people at eight o'clock in the morning. And then drive to the schools where her cadet teachers were doing their work. So every spring during the later years we were there, we had a Sunday afternoon dinner.

VM: Where we had students.

RM: Fun for all her . . .

VM: And the teachers with whom they'd been placed.

RM: Supervising teachers and school principals. Fifty people to dinner, buffet style with card tables set up in our garden. And the other would be for all of our, the majors in our department, of which we had about eighty, I think, the years we were there. And all of the staff members and wives in our department. And we'd

scrub new potatoes until three o'clock in the morning. And fried chicken all day to get ready for, so that those two occasions in the spring of the year were killers for both of us. But the rewards were abundant. We felt we created a unity. And, of course, we always had President and Mrs. Knolls there as guests on both occasions.

PY: What was your field? You speak of our department.

VM: Speech.

RM: Oh.

VM: Dramatic art, I did my graduate.

RM: Her masters is in dramatic art, and my degrees are in rhetoric and speech pathology and minor in psychology. And actually I could have had my degree in psychology except I didn't want to teach psychology. I wanted to teach in the speech arts. But she was the dramatic one and I was the talkative one.

VM: But we did our graduate work at the University of Iowa. So we had

RM: So administration, we sort of stumbled into it, I think. I was thinking the other day, I'd never told anybody about my career as an investment advisor or consultant. But that's sort of stumbled into when we found ourselves being called upon to assist committees, citizens committees,

to create understanding of the problems of the school districts. When we went to Oregon, I was in the Kiwanis Club and the superintendent of schools was, and the assistant superintendent were both in the Kiwanis Clubs. And when their tax elections failed, they had to turn to somebody for help. And so I was over in close to the Teachers Institute or something, and came home and found I had been selected to chair a meeting of a citizens committee, which was being formed to deal with the problem of keeping the schools going. Oregon had a peculiar law that said only so much money could be raised in relation to what was possible in 1916. And so they had to have a school finance election every year whether it included bonding for additional buildings. And before we left up there, we were up to our necks in volunteer work, assisting the school district to finance its operations and build additional buildings to accommodate the expanding school population. And because they had an nepotism law at the university, she would have been teaching there as she was at Pacific, but they couldn't have a husband and wife on the same . . .

VM: Well, I went into the high school.

RM: On the staff. So they drafted her to teach at the high

school. So we were deep in helping the community to finance its educational services. And word got out, and that's why we were drafted to go to Modesto to head that institution when there was, when they fired the president of the institution because he didn't seem to be able to get things done. But we had their . . .

VM: Now maybe this is aside from the development of the College of the Desert.

PY: No, it's very important, I think, you know, to have this background. It's very good. I'm glad you

RM: Well, this tells you why we were glad to live on campus and to try to do the things, to get faculty to know each other, students to know each other, faculty and students and other staff to realize that they were members of a team.

VM: And we always loved to have young people around us. And that's one reason when we left and thought we'd come to a milder climate and people told us about Leisure World and how fine it was, but it's all so secluded. And we didn't want to . . . We wanted, now you hear the children, you hear the children out here. And we love to have them. And, my, our doorbell's constantly ringing with young people who are selling this for one thing or another.

And none of those young people could move into the Leisure World grouping. So we have been very . . .

RM: We secluded ourselves here partly because we felt the worst thing we could do would be to stay in the shadow of the college and the . . .

VM: And all they feel they had to consult us for.

RM: Involved in any way. We felt that the administrative staff needed a free hand and we shouldn't be where we could even be accused of meddling. And partly because this lady had this health problem drop on her head.

VM: Don't talk about that.

RM: Ten years ago. And the desert was a hot place where her polycyclemia would be exaggerated. So fortunately we were near enough to retirement that we could ease out and now give our whole time to . . .

VM: The board really would like to have had us stay.

RM: Oh, yes.

VM: And, as counselors.

RM: They wanted us to stay on as head of the institution, but we think that you can make a mistake by staying too long. We've seen it happen.

VM: We've been down in the desert almost fifteen years.

RM: Fourteen years to the day, I guess.

VM: Well, I thought it was a little into the fifteen year, but possibly not.

RB: No, by twenty-four hours or something like that. (laughter)

VM: No! My, you're a . . .

PY: I understand you did something for the first graduating class, that you made that a very special occasion.

RM: I don't think that's quite true.

VM: Well, we did have an event.

RM: I think we had tea at the house after. We did have people over to the home for tea at the time of the dedication ceremony.

VM: Oh, yes. We had them come in afterward. And the airplanes stopped making noise that Gogerty had . . .

RM: At the first graduating class . . .

VM: We did have one . . .

RM: This is only three people.

VM: Yes, three people, and I was trying to think.

RM: We've actually held the graduation in the board room as I remember.

VM: I think we did.

RM: Sort of an informal affair.

VM: And then invited them to come over.

RM: Because, you see, our first class was mostly freshmen

with a few sophomore transfers from somewhere, and I've forgotten where. So the next graduating class . . .

VM: Was a good size, but . . .

RM: Well, no, two or three hundred, I guess. But the first one was just three people.

PY: What kind of students were you getting initially, and how did you recruit them?

RM: Well, we didn't do anything to recruit them.

VM: Really recruit.

RM: They were the graduates. This type of institution is established to accommodate students of the high, graduates of the high school within the district who did not have the financial wherewithal to go away to other institutions or they might not have the academic credentials to do so.

VM: At Whitman we did have students come from other areas.

RM: Oh, yes. That was before the law was changed.

VM: Well, just the desert.

RM: Yes, from other states.

VM: Yes.

RM: Goodness! And particularly in our second year, we had students from Michigan and Minnesota and Kansas and Washington and Idaho and all over the United States

because they could come there, and under the law, we couldn't even charge them tuition. And some of them created some of our biggest problems because they were people who wanted to get away from home or away from situations they didn't like. They were not well adjusted. But at any rate, we had, as all such community colleges have, we had the bulk of our student body, people who wouldn't have gone to college if there were not one within commuting distance. And then there were also students who chose to attend that institution for financial reasons or convenience, even though they were fully qualified to be admitted to Berkeley or Stanford or any other institution in the country. And . . .

VM: Naturally.

RM: Ray Rummin's son wanted to go to Harvard. And I talked him out of it because he had the academic credentials to be admitted to Harvard, but we had seen too many people who didn't have . . .

VM: Freshmen.

RM: A good really solid academic background, but made it through with their native intelligence. And then would fall by the wayside when they met the rigors of academic discipline in institutions which just believed in academic

discipline or you're out. And I can remember so well talking to Ray Rummin's son, Ray sent him to my office for advice and I said, you can be a good student, but you don't have, you haven't had the academic discipline to prepare you for Harvard. And I'd have to tell you, you'd probably be out within a year's time. And I don't like to see that kind of disappointment. But later he went to Stanford and graduated, and graduated from Stanford Law School. He had the talent, but he hadn't, he'd been a popular student and a football player and his father was one of the trustees of the high school district. But we have lots of students, and I must tell you one that impresses me in particular. A young man asked for a short conference with me one day. And he said, you don't know who I am. I'm now enrolled at the University of California at La Jolla, but I just want to say thanks to somebody that this institution was here for me when I needed it. He said, my family moved down to Coachella from Oklahoma, and I had finished high school after a fashion. Got my diploma, but I didn't have any ambition to do anything. And somebody said, well, why don't you go out and take an evening course at the college. It's a lot of fun.

VM: We had quite a number of evening courses, and it was very

RM: So he enrolled. I don't know whether he enrolled in evening or daytime, but as he reported it, he took a history class. And first thing he knew he found himself getting F's on his papers. And he didn't know why, but it was discovered through some counselor that he couldn't read well enough to do the work. So his teacher who told him that said, why don't you go up to the reading lab? They can teach people to read. So he went up to the reading lab under Dr. Griffin's supervision and learned to read. Learned to read well enough, fast enough so that he could master the content of history and political science books. And he graduated with honors finally. But that's what this kind of institution is for, in part, is to rescue people who have not responded to the discipline of high school and are not really ready for what is required in college.

VM: A four-year

RM: But this type of institution picks up and helps those who don't have the talent to go on to four-year institutions and gets them into vocational programs. And it broadens an education generally, but also teaches them something

a profession which makes them employable, but it also through the years has had to play its roll in preparing students for university level who can compete successfully on that level because they've had good teachers in community colleges.

VM: And this is why it's called the community college, because it's . . .

RM: I think another reason we were in . . .

TAPE 1, SIDE 2:

RM: Actually when we went to what was known as College of Pacific then, and became University of Pacific, we went there at a transitional time toward the end of the depression when College of Pacific was in deep financial trouble, as a lot of institutions were, independent institutions. And it had worked out an arrangement, none has ever been done since that resembles it, but they agreed that they would offer only junior and senior in graduate work. No freshman or sophomore classes. If the people in the high school district wanted to take advantage of the law and establish a community college, but they had no campus, no funds to build one, but they would pay rent to College of Pacific for use of its

facilities and would also use part of the College of Pacific's staff so that they wouldn't, that the teachers wouldn't lose their jobs.

VM: And we taught in both the junior college and senior college.

RM: That's right. We both went there. I got the job first, and then the opponent wanted to know if, ask my wife . . .

VM: We were in Iowa.

RM: If she would teach some courses in the Department of Education. And some in the Department of Speech. She taught, what's her name?

VM: Interpretation.

RM: Oh. Well, Baxter.

VM: Oh, yes.

RM: Baxley, Barbara Baxley, and oh, who was the one who played in East of Eden?

VM: Barbara Baxley, but she's probably since . . .

Oh, that was . . .

RM: One of her students. And we see one of our former students on television every once in awhile now. Anyway . . .

VM: MacDonald Carey. I don't know whether you've seen him.

PY: Yes.

VM: That Van Fleet.

RM: Yes, Jo Van Fleet.

VM: Jo Van Fleet.

RM: Was one of them, her interpretation.

VM: And she's on television.

RM: Well, I'm getting off the track here.

VM: Yes.

RM: The point is circumstance caused us to have one foot in the community college even though we were hired by College of Pacific. I went in there as head of the department. And she went there as a, to teach some courses in the School of Education. But we also, they were short of teachers, and students just flocked to the institution because they could go to College of Pacific and not pay any tuition.

VM: So really, from the beginning of our experience, we were building a college. And this then was . . .

RM: But we saw an end to the college in action . . .

VM: At the desert.

RM: While we were really employees of basically of an independent institution. So that's another reason that we went to Modesto which was only thirty miles south of where we had been at College of Pacific. And we used to have students from Modesto College transfer,

well, actually I think Jo Van Fleet was a transfer.

VM: I think she, well, she was definitely . . .

RM: And John Crabbe and Bob Ely. We got transfer students from Modesty Junior College.

PY: You mentioned one thing that I was curious about. You said it's a community college, which means that it services the community. How do you feel COD related to Palm Desert as a specific community, and then to the whole valley?

RM: Well, any college becomes a cultural influence in its community the moment it begins to function. And that applies to the people next door as well as the people forty and fifty miles away. They all touch the college.

VM: You have a part of this.

RM: And it touches them. And the community colleges also, financed primarily by the taxpayers of the community. They used to be called junior colleges from the day they were first founded as adjunct to the high schools back in 1911, but they became official junior colleges in 1921. The Enabling Act of 1921 was the reason that Modesto Junior College was founded and became the first to be founded under the Enabling Act of 1921. But they become a cultural influence in two ways. One, they

receive the high school graduates from the families within the district, but also their night programs serve adults who had never been able to go to college.

VM: We have many adults.

RM: But want some more education. And many of our graduates, particularly in the nursing program, but many of our graduates were persons employed in local establishments who began taking part-time work at the college and gradually made it. People twenty-five, thirty, forty years old graduated from junior college. And the Civic Center Act also makes the community or junior college a community institution in that it says in effect the community may use your facilities without charge if they're not needed for your educational purposes. You have the college's educational purposes first, but you're obligated to the community to allow them to assemble in your auditoriums and gymnasiums and the like for cultural programs, music and whatever. So a community orchestra becomes a natural thing. You've used some professional musicians from the area, but you also pick up a lot of people who are not professionals. They just like to play.

VM: They have wonderful support from people throughout the

whole area, except Mr. Gogerty. (chuckle)

RM: And those loyal to him. Oh, well, Mr. Gogerty was just a businessman and he saw, well, half a million dollars.

VM: He was fine. Later he was. Yes.

RM: He was an Irishman with a clenched fist, and he met an Irishman with a clenched jaw, and so we had at it, I'm sorry to say because I think if Mr. Gogerty and I had met under other conditions, we would have gotten along fine.

VM: Oh, I think he's a fine man, and he just . . .

RM: And if he had been selected as architect, who knows? He might have done a splendid job.

VM: But we think that the way Mr. Warneky planned it, it ties into the desert; don't you think that the . . .

RM: Oh, well, that was his tent.

VM: He was very careful.

RM: The arches were taken from the, one of the first lectures he gave, Don Mitchell and Gale Brumwell and me was where the arch came from.

VM: Well, he built a . . .

RM: And the arch originated in Egypt, and it was visualized as adjacent palm trees intertwined their leaves in an arch.

VM: One of the late buildings at Stanford.

RM: Oh, he was designing buildings at Stanford when he was employed by the College of the Desert port.

VM: And so we were very pleased with his . . .

RM: Of course, as you know, there are many of the Stanford, the first Stanford, buildings were arched. And he modified the arches for structural and economic reasons in some of the new buildings he was designing at the time he took the contract for the College of the Desert.

VM: And our older son, who is the writer and professor at Cornell . . .

RM: Stanford graduate.

VM: Is a Stanford graduate and he was so delighted at the design of the College of the Desert because it was sort of, he felt, an extension of Stanford. He loves Stanford, of course. Our younger son went to Berkeley, and then for the first year he wanted to go to a big institution. But the second year he went to College of the Desert.

RM: And the third . . .

VM: And then went back . . .

RM: To the University of Redlands.

VM: And . . .

RM: He has his BA and MA from Redlands, our second son.

VM: In psychology. And is with the Mental Health Clinic up in Barstow, so it has been a family . . .

RM: But you're not asking many questions. You aren't getting a chance, are you?

VM: No. We're just talking.

PY: Oh, well, you're giving me so much information, I don't need to. I was curious, though, how did you select the faculty?

VM: Oh, that was . . .

RM: We had five hundred applications. We sent out notices nationwide.

VM: I found we had them come to the home, so we could, well, get to feel.

PY: Now you were down on one of the Joshua trees?

RM: No, we lived there only three months.

VM: Then we moved onto the campus.

RM: We moved into the campus residence in November of that first fall, as soon as the site was purchased.

VM: So we had a larger home there on the campus and could accommodate . . .

RM: And after the first bond election was completed.

PY: So when did you actually open the campuses to, and when did you set up the temporary office?

RM: Well, the temporary office was on Highway 111 before we arrived. We had our first meeting, well, we had our interview in that office.

VM: That's right. With the other class.

RM: In fact, we also had our first official meeting with the board of trustees in that office on noon of July 1st, 1959. And Mrs. Brumwell had cooked some chicken, and she and Gale brought it to the board meeting, and we had refreshments before or after the board meeting, I guess. I don't remember which.

VM: I said that was when I fell for the board.

RM: No, that was in the interview.

VM: Oh, yes. (chuckle)

RM: We were both interviewed for this position, and she was sitting in a chair and started to move her chair back. And somehow or other her foot slipped on the polished . . .

VM: Well, I told them I'd . . . but I didn't really fall.

RM: Linoleum, but she almost fell out of her chair.

VM: I know I caught myself.

RM: So figured it was . . .

VM: So I told them I had certainly fallen for it, and I had.

RM: But we were in that office until the structural, until the buildings were virtually completed before we moved

an office onto the campus. The administration building was one of the first completed because it was simpler in design. And we moved furniture into that and were partially ready at registration time with the registrar's office in the center of the administration building. But we were on campus essentially three years before . . .

VM: Before the college opened.

RM: Before the first students were there. And I can still remember walking out onto the roof of that campus residence, and when the site development was begun. And it was just like a colony of ants swarming all over. There were workmen just moving back and forth . . .

VM: All around the houses

RM: Across that raised portion that the first buildings were to go on. And I can still visualize that. From that distance they looked about so high. But they were in trenches and, you know, laying the sewers and electric lines and footings for the structural portion of the buildings.

VM: The home was located almost in the middle of the campus, which gave them a little problem of . . .

RM: Designing around it.

VM: Designing around the home. But they didn't want to move

it onto any other point on the campus and it just sat.

RM: Well, we got a figure for moving it, but it would have cost more to move than to build a new home.

VM: So we just . . .

RM: So designed around it, and there it sits.

VM: But buildings were pretty close to us.

PY: So you're saying that the campus was built more or less all at once before, and then students came afterwards. It wasn't that you had temporary places rented.

RM: That's correct. That's one of the questions the board asked in the beginning, what do you think? Should we move in some temporary buildings and start classes or should we try to put up new buildings before we open?

VM: Too hard to get rid of those.

RM: And I very quickly said, well, the moment you put up some temporary buildings, you'll be stuck with them for a lot of years.

VM: Just can't get rid of them.

RM: And natural pressures, I've seen it happen other places. And if you want to create this kind of atmosphere that you're suggesting with our living on campus and having social contact with students and faculty, let's wait a year. If all runs smoothly, you can do this in two years.

It will take you a year to do the designing and working drawings and a year to complete the contract. And it will be close, but it's possible, to open in two years from 1959. And then I can remember when the lawsuits began and so on, but Attorney Magahee said, let's reset our sights. This could get awfully sticky and we don't want to spend too much money until we're legally in the clear.

VM: But we were out there on the campus, things were going along, but Mr. Gogerty wouldn't quit give up. (chuckle)

RM: Oh, no. Well, once he had decided to fight and said, I've only begun to fight, he couldn't gracefully back away from it. He would have been happy to be the architect and not sell land, or not being chosen architect, he wanted. After all, there's a half million dollars for him the way he had it set up. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for so many acres and he'd own land all around, the amount of land the college wanted. A big financial plum.

VM: I remember when we went over there and looked at it.

RM: He was no dummy. He saw the possibilities, but . . .

VM: It would have been a good location, but I think what, where we were . . .

RM: Well, later it was. Now. But Annenberg hadn't built his golf course.

VM: That's right.

RM: At that time. And the way that wind and sand swept down across what would have been the acreage on which the college would have been built was something to behold.

VM: Yes.

RM: And the board members had all lived in the desert long enough to know. It was bad enough where we were, but out there it would have been much worse.

VM: But when it got planted and the streets and the parking . . .

RM: But once Annenberg built his golf acreage, there was a natural protection there which made it not so bad, so the Eisenhower Hospital, and of course, it located so very near to the, it was at the extreme southern end of the acreage that the college would have had to buy that for the whole campus.

PY: You were beginning to talk about faculty a little earlier and how you chose them.

RM: Oh, yes. Applications from all over, and so we brought our addendum instruction at the end of the first year and one of his jobs was to sift through those applications.

But we interviewed personally every faculty member we hired, paid his transportation to come to the desert for interview. And Dr. Ingles and I, at least, interviewed all of them. And we wanted people with credentials. And as I remember, almost exactly half of our initial faculty, this is regular academic faculty, had their doctoral degrees. We wanted to make it an academically strong institution, so we stole two scientists from Loma Linda University. And we stole a businessman from Stanford.

VM: We also wanted faculty academically, yes, fine, but faculty who . . .

RM: Who wanted to teach.

VM: Wanted to teach and we could feel that they loved young people or felt . . .

RM: And not research.

VM: Had a feeling for them.

RM: Not people who were research oriented, but teaching oriented. And I can still remember the day that Dr. Eugene Hall . . .

VM: We were very proud of the faculty.

RM: Came into the office there and Dr. Ingles came in and said, I kinda like the looks of this fellow. Do you have

time to see him? I said, time? That's the most important job we have. So Dr. Hall walked into my office, and we talked a little bit. And I said, just a minute, Dr. Ingles. I'd like to see you. I said, let's grab this man.

VM: He really is . . .

RM: And he proved to be a, and of course, he in term recommended Norman, who later completed his doctoral degree and is now head of the music department.

VM: Dr. Hall has moved, but John Norman is still there, and you've probably met him.

RM: I think Norman is the only one we didn't interview. We took him on Dr. Hall's special . . .

VM: But he was . . .

RM: Oh, terrific!

VM: Great.

RM: Terrific. But Dr. Hall had a wonderful personality, and was nationally known.

VM: Surely did.

RM: For his high school band sponsorship and leadership.

VM: Everybody . . . got for him.

PY: What was your bait? (chuckle) I mean, you were this tiny little college starting out in the middle of the desert.

VM: Yes.

RM: Well, we had a good salary schedule.

VM: We were just so thrilled that we could get the faculty.

RM: And a small college. And a climate that attracted people like Hall and Norman from Michigan. We almost went to Michigan.

VM: Yes.

RM: Michigan State University when we went to Oregon. We had a better offer from there, but we took the train from Chicago up there one, after we'd been attending a national convention in Chicago, and we went on up there to be interviewed. And they offered us the job, and it was a good one to head the department there on the Michigan State University campus. But my wife was born in Winnepeg, Canada, and we both knew what cold weather really is.

VM: And I'm an American citizen.

RM: And we had a little seven-year-old son we wondered whether we wanted to take back there. We said, well, this is good, but suppose you get stuck here for the rest of your professional life. So we held that offer for three or four months while we bargained with the University of Oregon where the man who retired as

president was, at that time was trying to get us to come there. He was not, he would not be allowed to take the headship of the department, but he had been on our staff at Pacific and fled to Oregon. And we finally chose Oregon because it was a much milder climate, but we felt we'd been at Pacific eleven years and that was long enough. Now I'm not sure how I've walked away from your original question, but . . .

PY: I had understood that some of your faculty came with you from Modesto. Is that true?

VM: Well.

RM: Dr. Ingles and I had worked together.

VM: Dr. Ingles.

RM: I hired him as dean of instruction there and worked with him four years before he went down there. And he and I seemed to think pretty much alike and worked smoothly together. And he was intrigued by the prospect of that assignment, so he was the first one we 'd hired.

VM: And he got . . .

RM: We didn't want to take too many from the institution we were leaving because that just isn't good practice. But . . .

VM: Dr. Goodwin we brought from . . .

RM: Actually, Dr. Goodwin wasn't . . .

VM: Stockton, he was a minister of the Methodist . . .

RM: We had known him somewhat for years. We'd never been a member of his church, but we knew, well, some mutual friends had us to dinner with Dr. and Mrs. Goodwin before he was ever a doctor. And he wrote and said he thought he had room in his life for a second career. Would we be interested.

VM: He was going to leave the ministry.

RM: And we invited him to come down and be looked at and look at, and he's right up there at the very top of the good choices we made.

VM: Yes.

RM: Remarkably fine teacher. He completed his doctorate in psychology after he joined our staff. He had an honorary doctorate from Pacific when we hired him. But most of the degree worked toward his academic degree. So that, and the head of the art department . . .

VM: And his wife Mary Lee teaches.

RM: The head of the art department was from Eugene, Oregon, and he had gone on leave to College of Pacific, not while we were there, but went there on a leave of absence to teach art. And we checked back with the people there

who knew him and they spoke so highly of him, even though he was only in the high school at Eugene, Oregon. They liked him so much as a college or university teacher that he's one of the first we hired.

PY: Do you feel that from the time when classes actually first started when the college began to function as it should to the time when you left that it had changed greatly? In other words, faculty had changed, students had changed.

RM: No. No. Pretty much the same values, same traditions, same procedures.

VM: Yes.

RM: It was larger, and certainly our adult program had mushroomed. It virtually exploded in those years. And those were the years of great growth, and those were the sixties when student rebellion was rife across the country.

VM: We had a little bit, but not too bad.

RM: I think one of the reasons we didn't have more of it was our tradition of having all of the freshmen students in our home in small groups.

VM: The students know us and

RM: And they could come and ask questions. And we encountered

a little hostility. We had a few real troublemakers on campus, but the board . . .

VM: Just three, I think.

RM: Never did fail to back me up on the suspension. We didn't get as far as expelling anyone, but we had to suspend some students for just being determined to do . . .

VM: We think expelling is, we're not in favor of it.

RM: Well, legally that's a very severe penalty for community college students.

VM: But we suspended and that seemed to work out.

RM: Oh, yes. One day we suspended about fifty.

VM: But they came back and were great students.

RM: We didn't want the kind of thing that happened elsewhere, where students put on a march around the campus. And then a lot of outsiders come in and start throwing this, that and the other, and you have a riot on your hands.

VM: And these students were led by real troublemakers, the three that finally . . .

RM: One of them was arrested on the San Jose State campus the next year when he went there.

VM: The next year after we had him expelled

RM: The FBI came down to ask about him.

PY: Barbara Keedy was mentioning to me, she's still with the

bookstore there; she was saying that she felt there had been a change recently in the student body in the sense that so many of them now, particularly talking about the daytime students, that they are working, their life is really outside of the college, whereas before she felt when she was going there and for years after, that there was, life was centered around the college.

VM: Yes, it was while we were there.

RM: Well, I doubt that there's been any great change in the number who were working and going to college at the same time.

VM: But somehow . . .

RM: Characteristically . . .

VM: They seemed to unite, seemed to be a body, a really . . .

RM: Well, we were small enough then. And now it's larger.

VM: But it was pretty good sized when we left.

RM: Oh, yes. Yes.

PY: When did you leave?

RM: In seventy-three.

VM: Seventy-two. Seventy-three. That's right.

PY: I think she's been more or less talking about the time after you left.

RM: Well, all institutions have changed in the past seven

years. Our son talks about students that at Carnell, which is a highly selective institution. They don't seem to be as well disciplined as they were five, six, ten years ago.

VM: Of course, he works mainly with graduate students, but he did have a . . .

RM: He teaches his big lecture sections of juniors and seniors, too.

VM: And not prepared the way students used to be, he thinks.

RM: I suspect another factor which may not be recognized by the inexperienced observer is that the school population in terms of high school graduates has been shrinking now for the past six or seven years. And that automatically makes, it seems as though there are more of the part-time students who graduated years ago. So I suspect that's true, that the percentage of full-time students versus the part-time students is now smaller. That would naturally be inimical to the cohesiveness of the student body. And, of course, the fact that we were a new school and starting up new student programs in athletics and forensics and drama and literary societies and the like. That brought about a certain cohesiveness within the student body that now

the luster has worn.

PY: I'm afraid . . .

VM: And then, and women faculty members.

RM: Yes, I'm glad you mentioned that.

VM: Yes.

PY: To the when?

RM: Very important.

VM: Belonged to the Women's Faculty Club in the College of the Desert. I don't know whether I have one of the first . . .

RM: Another factor in the cohesiveness of the school college population, students, faculty, other classified employees.

PY: This was Women's Faculty Club, you say?

RM: Yes. That's right. We noticed in particular when we went to Modesto what had happened in the way of deterioration and this kind of thing because the person who had been president there for seven years was a very wonderful fellow. And he stayed on. He and I got along beautifully. But his wife had died of cancer while he was in the office. And there had been no social activity to bring the faculty together. So one of the things we did the first year we were there was to have all on the faculty and spouses in groups of about twenty-five in

our home for dinner, a buffet type of dinner. And Mrs. McCall cooked up, made dishes of chicken and rice and I've forgotten what all. And then we sat around in the living room of our home. And have you ever played parlor Ping-Pong? (chuckle) I've even forgotten how to play it, but we broke down the reserve and built up. And we invited them, we intentionally invited them from different departments and so on. But we had all the faculty and spouse, their spice or spouses, in groups of twenty-five. And we had other dinners and so on. But especially those in which we gathered in the living room. And one of the little things aside from just discussion was to play parlor Ping-Pong. But it was some kind of a system where you bounce the intellectual ball back and forth and you have to be kind of quick. And the mistakes you'll make are funny, but you just create a large circle of people and you start this game of parlor Ping-Pong. And . . . .

VM: I'm sure I've got . . .

RM: Of that I'm sure.

VM: I'm sure I've got the first . . .

RM: Wasn't important.

VM: But you'll see how I used to write little

of the desert. And we met . . . yes. But this, I don't know, it's kind of, I don't know whether you'd be interested in taking that.

PY: Oh, if I could, I would like to. Thank you.

VM: I wish I had the . . .

PY: Earlier I was looking.

VM: Then, of course, it gradually got to be a nicer-looking book and

PY: So you actually had something that was the Woman's Club of Palm Desert.

VM: Oh, yes.

RM: She was president.

VM: I was president.

PY: Oh! I understand now.

RM: She was first a member, and then, as always happens to this gal, they . . .

PY: Hire her on.

RM: They then move her on to the top and she begins to carry a load she shouldn't. She was Mother of the Year, State of California, 196 . . .

END OF INTERVIEW